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Cold fronts stopped moving through Texas in January. Old fronts just stayed for the new ones to pile in on top of them. Arctic weather is stacked from the Panhandle down deep into the Shortgrass Country. It looks like the lemonade for the Fourth of July can be cooled from the ice off the rivers.

Cows must have shrunk over 100 pounds in a few weeks. Sack goods were unable to turn back the loss. Herders became as humped up as the cattle. Stress of the feeds and feeding put so much strain on the hombres that on four legs they'd look as bad as the old cows do.

Farm to market roads are hazardous to travel. Icy track conditions aren't as much of a danger as the race drivers. Ranchers leave in the mornings in a hurry to go to the ranch. After hearing the reports from their cowboys, they become distracted. They hit the roads in worse shape than a fellow playing motorized blindman's bluff.

Center stripes and shoulders are meaningless. I see old boys throwing gravel from one side and picking up more gravel on the other side before the first barrage has hit the ground. I expect any day to find a mile of right-of-way fence rolled under a feed wagon. The highway department ought to be widening the roads instead of sanding the bridges.

Nobody has a sense of humor left. I asked a compadre over the CB the other day when he was going to start feeding. His station wagon weaved into a trembling motion. He replied, "Minus 85 days ago and to hell with you, good buddy."

Just to show you how much he'd changed, last summer he was using those big orange highway department flags to stop folks and invited them to share his beer cooler. I was only joshing. But you find a fellow who can smile after seeing cottonseed meal frozen on a cow's muzzle and I'll show you a fellow that'll make Johnny Carson sound glum as a mortician.

I watched a television show some time ago, and I guess you did too, that said the herders over in the mountains of Italy supplemented their income by kidnapping rich people. It sounded like a good deal for us, until I penciled in the travel expense. Cow and sheep centers are too far away from the wealthy class to make kidnapping pay. It'd be just my luck to hang onto an old boy that was made of paper.

Collecting a ransom around here during the winter would be mighty slim picking. By the time the feed store and the bank were satisfied, negotiations would have to be done on post cards.

Picking a victim is another problem. As long as the winter nights are, you sure wouldn't want to snatch a customer that snored or wanted to stay up playing dominoes to ungodly hours in the morning.

Encouraging the family to put up the bail on a cowboy would also be sticky. I never have thought that any of us should take a chance on entering a claiming race. I've seen enough old gals sitting out in pickups in front of the auction rings to know they wouldn't go to much trouble to recover a stolen or missing husband. You look, some day. Everyone of them is as bitter as quinine water.

I say hang on for the big thaw. President Carter has already comforted us by saying to cut down on the heat. Kidnapping might not be so bad if the bandit's lair had a good warm stove to sit by and wait for spring.